

Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremism – CSIS Engagement 2017-2022

The Threat

- The IMVE threat is diverse and multifaceted. The continually evolving IMVE threat presents a number of unique challenges and operational dynamics, and like the RMVE threat, continues to evolve.
- The IMVE threat spans Xenophobic Violence (racially motivated violence, ethno-nationalist violence); Anti-Authority Violence (anti-government, anti-law enforcement, anarchist violence); Gender Driven Violence (violent misogyny including Incel and anti-LGTBQ violence) as well as other Grievance-driven and Ideologically-motivated Violence.
- Across this spectrum of investigative interests, our investigative case work and coverage building efforts are focused on the identification of individuals and groups presenting threat behavior and mindset supportive of the threat or use of serious violence to achieve an ideological purpose as per section 2(c) of the CSIS Act. The nexus to the threat or use of violence to achieve societal change is a key threshold consideration underpinning all Service case work and assessments in this investigative space. It must be recognized that the space below this threshold is vast and represents a fertile ground for radicalization for more extreme ideologies.

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Assessments and Activities

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defined by section 2(c) of the CSIS Act.

- Since then, the Service has been a leader in the Security and Intelligence community on understanding the IMVE threat, having led three GC-IMVE initiatives: IMVE terminology, IMVE 2C Thresholds, and IMVE-Fabric of Society. CSIS worked with analysts from across the GC and law enforcement to develop common language and terminology that has been adopted by international partners.
- CSIS has also clearly defined its threshold when investigating the IMVE threat and shared with GC partners briefings and products to help others understand the analytical process used by CSIS in its decision-making process when ascertaining whether an identified IMVE threat actor meets our investigative threshold and what action, if any, should be undertaken and by whom, all while keeping strategic considerations in mind.

- CSIS has worked extensively to foster understanding of ideologically motivated threats and the layers of involvement or engagement of society from those who hold extremist views and who may never reach a national security or even criminal threat level to those who cross the 2(c) threshold.
- The first listings of IMVE groups as terrorist entities under the Anti-Terrorism Act in 2019 06 were indicative of the realisation of the growing threat posed by IMVE groups following the terrorist attacks in Christchurch in 2019 03.
- Since 2018, IAB has published extensively on IMVE and briefed more than 3,600 GC, law enforcement, and provincial representatives on the threat. Between 2017 and 2021, IAB briefed approximately 44 GC DM/ADMs on the threat posed by IMVE. Since 2017, IAB has organized and run seven one-day workshops for GC/law enforcement on the threat posed by IMVE.
- Between 2017-2021, IAB provided seven Ministerial briefs on the threat posed by IMVE. The Service has provided senior decision makers in all levels of government in-depth analysis, assessments and briefings regarding IMVE to build understanding and support decision making to manage this complex threat.

Public engagement

- CSIS has also spoken publicly about the IMVE threat before Parliament, as well as to external stakeholders and through Public Reports and speeches.
- In his 2018 speech to the Economic Club of Canada, CSIS' Director spoke to the use of digital media to share extremist views and coordinate attacks, terrorist exploitation of privacy settings, encrypted messaging apps and crypto-currencies to support their violence goals and evade detection by intelligence and law enforcement agencies. CSIS framed terrorism, including IMVE, as the greatest threat to Canadian public safety, while framing foreign interference and cyber threats as greater strategic challenged and long-term risks.
- In May 2019, CSIS Director appeared before the House of Commons' Standing Committee National Security and Public Safety (SECU) stating that CSIS was focusing more of its resources on misogynist, white nationalist and neo-nationalist groups, given their use of terrorist methods to achieve their goals.
- In 2020, CSIS released its *2019 Public Report*, which defined the term IMVE and outlined four categories of IMVE: Xenophobic, anti-authority, gender-driven, and other grievance-driven and ideologically motivated violence.
- Released in 2021, the Service's *2020 Public Report* assessed the IMVE space had evolved with unprecedented multiplicity and fluidity. The report noted the exacerbation of the IMVE threat due

to the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically within the xenophobic and anti-authority narratives. This increased threat was in part amplified by false information spread by extremists over the internet. The report further spoke about the increasingly violent calls for the arrest and execution of public figures including politicians as an area of increasing concern.

- Over the same period, CSIS also responded to media requests about the growing IMVE threat, specifically in the context of the incel movement and gender-driven violence – noting the several incidents of incel-related violence in Canada since 2016 and how the Service continues to analyze the complexities of the incel movement.
- 2021 also marked the most significant increase in engagement through external stakeholder outreach, public speeches and Parliamentary committee appearances. AOSE worked with the Director to reach out to four Cabinet Ministers to inform on CSIS stakeholder engagement efforts including outreach to communities and community organizations targeted by extremists, especially in the context of the Islamophobic attack in London, Ontario. This outreach included academic organizations, national community organizations and human rights advocacy groups.
- The Director reiterated the rise in IMVE in his 2021 speech at the Centre for International Governance Innovation stating domestic extremist are moving away from Daesh towards violent misogyny and other violent ideologies.
- In 2021, CSIS used social media like YouTube, to post informative videos on IMVE terminology.
- In March 2021, in the context of updates to Canada's terrorist listings, CSIS provided a technical briefing for media on IMVE and CSIS explained the shift away from previous nomenclature, i.e. "right-wing" and "left-wing", was due to how it oversimplified the threat.
- The Service's Assistant Director, Requirements, also appeared before SECU in May 2021 further to the committee's study of IMVE. The ADR noted that grievances can be fluid within the IMVE space, citing COVID as an example for increased anti-authority grievances. The ADR also spoke about CSIS' regular collaboration and joint efforts with RCMP and other partners to ensure threats are being assessed and mitigated when possible by the appropriate agency.
- The beginning of 2022 saw significant manifestations of pandemic-related grievances in the form of the Freedom Convoy. Although CSIS has not spoken publically about the convoy, CSIS has received media requests on the event, and the Service is expecting a Parliamentary appearance before SECU in the near term to discuss the rise of IMVE and anti-authority grievances.

ITAC

- Operating under the CSIS Act, it plays a unique role within the security and intelligence community, notably by broadly sharing assessments on terrorism threats worldwide, including those related to what is now referred to Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremism (IMVE).
- Through various types of publications – from in depth analysis of IMVE trends to specific threat actors profiles – ITAC has provided senior decision-makers in the federal government as well as other security partners with significant and diverse analytical products pertaining to IMVE.
- Since 2017, ITAC published over 200 reports on this topic at different classification levels. These reports were drafted according to ITAC's rigorous analytical methodology, peer review and extensive consultation with intelligence collectors.
- ITAC has analysed the trajectory of the IMVE threat in Canada and abroad over the years, with specific focus on watershed events such as the 2017 attack at a mosque in Quebec City, the listing of IMVE groups as terrorist entities under the *Criminal Code*, and the 2021 attack on Muslim family in London, Ontario. Between 2017 and 2022, ITAC has mapped out and assessed the ideologies, sources of inspiration, related entities, their international connections, techniques and critical incidents relating to the rise of IMVE as a serious terrorism phenomenon.
- As is the case in several Western countries, the IMVE milieu in Canada has evolved, and so has the terrorism threat it poses. From an assessment made in 2017 stating that various right wing individuals and groups espousing a spectrum of extreme views online did not demonstrate an intent to carry out a violent act of terrorism, ITAC assessed in the December 2021 NTTL that an IMVE attack was more likely in Canada in the next 12 months than a Religiously Motivated Violent Extremism attack.
- Beyond IMVE-related threats of serious violence, ITAC's assessments over the past year have also highlighted IMVE-related threats and violent rhetoric directed at politicians and public figures, as well as the impact on societal resilience of the apparent normalization of the use of violent rhetoric and the threatening of violence as a means to express dissent.
- All these elements are regularly taken into account as part of the analysis that supports the NTTL. It is important to note, however, that while the Canadian terrorism landscape is fluid, the NTTL has remained at MEDIUM.
- ITAC's assessments and reports are widely disseminated across the security community and law enforcement partners, and verbal briefings are provided through the National Security governance framework as required. For instance, ITAC briefed the Assistant Deputy Ministers' National Security Operations Committee on the December 2021 NTTL assessment and the IMVE-related threats of the kind that later surfaced in the context of the 2022 Freedom Convoy.

Cabinet Advice

- CSIS attended three Cabinet meetings in the period prior to the invocation of the *Emergencies Act (EA)*; namely, one Safety, Security and Emergencies meeting and two Incident Response Group meetings.
- On February 3rd, CSIS assessed there were no indicators that known IMVE actors were planning to engage in violence. s.38
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- On February 13th, CSIS advised that the implementation of the *EA* would likely galvanize the anti-government narratives within the convoy and further the radicalization of some towards violence, referencing the increase in violent rhetoric following the declaration of a state of emergency by the Province of Ontario. Furthermore, CSIS advised that the invocation of the *EA* by the federal government would likely lead to the dispersing of the convoy within Ottawa but would likely increase the number of Canadians who hold extreme anti-government views and push some towards the belief that violence is the only solution to what they perceive as a broken system and government.
- Following the invocation of the *EA*, CSIS briefed Cabinet and reiterated the potential for the *EA* to increase anti-government views and violent ideologies, including in those not yet radicalized.
- The above points refer to the material prepared in preparation of Cabinet discussions and meetings, and although they reflect the assessment of the Service at the time, Cabinet discussions are confidential and it is possible that any of the prepared talking points were not ultimately used.